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BENJAMIN MCADOO
ARCHITECT
MEMBER, CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

INTERVIEWEE: BENJAMIN MCADOO

INTERVIEWERS: WILLIAM LITTLE

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[00:00:00] BENJAMIN MCADOO

...the initial formation of the group and its progress during the leadership of Tyree Scott. Then when Tyree Scott left the organization, then I would deal with it as almost another organization since his ideas as well as my own were set aside, and many ideas which we couldn't agree with then became policy for the CCA [Central Contractors Association]. Then after that, I guess it's really a third division, then after that the CCA went through another change, and more or less became an organization that was pretty much—I don't exactly know what the word is here that you would want to use—but the principle figure then became Mr. Willie Allen. The course that the CCA has taken for the last two or three years is really quite a bit different than the course that it had its formation with Tyree Scott and Jim Takasaki and myself, as well as a lot of other people too. Lynn Howell was there in the early stages primarily as the legal advisor but also a participant in the actual activities. Harley Bird was very important. This was, as I see it, the period where the CCA was the most effective. This was the period where it made its greatest gains in terms of changing the situation we had at that time. Some important members of the power structure listened to us. I am not saying that they were necessarily doing what we wanted them to do, but at least we had dialogue going. AGC [Associated General Contractors] was one important group that we were able to negotiate with. Various government agencies were working with us and gave us some credibility, or at least they felt that we had some credibility. After Tyree Scott left the organization, generally speaking, it lost much of the credibility that had been built up to that time.

That's pretty much just a brief kind of a history of what took place during the course of my association with the organization. I, of course—I don't have the right file here. Excuse me.

(break)

They had some idea that contracting was a bonanza and that you could go into contracting and make all kinds of money whether or not you performed. They saw the CCA as a big pie wherein they would be able to obtain considerable money without actually having to do anything for it. It was just a big grab bag. Certain forces, and you'll have to discover which ones of these you consider to be in this category, but I think you will discover as you go along that others were willing to give tacit support, but not really lend themselves and their time and their presence. But they nevertheless were important in terms of having overall support. There was rarely that the CCA was able to amass any mass action in the community as critical as the question was that they were dealing with. We rarely had more than I would say 50 to 75 people present including the downtown reporters, and the television cameras, and everybody else. Some of the people that did some of the most of the talking were the people who did the least in terms of actually getting out and closing jobs down. I don't even know if that would be possible in today's climate, but we happened to be at a particular juncture, and we had the moral side with us. We, as Lem Howel termed it one time, captured a lot of forts with unloaded guns. In other words, we shut down projects not so much because of our superior strength but because of a willingness on the parts of some of the governmental heads to at least listen to what we had to say. For reasons—I can't really tell what their reasons were, hopefully their reasons were to try to bring more justice and obey the law, but nevertheless, they cooperated with us to the extent that they closed down jobs. They did that in the case of the County Harborview Hospital addition up there. They did that in the case of the County Administration Building. They did it in the case of the swimming pool on 23rd Avenue, and they did it at the University to a lesser degree. There were some places where the CCA was not able to do it. All the way through the CCA had these so-called voices on the outside, whose ends I suspected as not being the ends I was attempting to achieve, and they were urging and they were forcing themselves on Tyree Scott.

Tyree was a very, very good leader for the time. He resisted some of these pressures, and kept his mind and kept the organization going towards his goal. Of course I advised him, and he accepted some of the things that I had to say. He also accepted some of the things that Takasaki had to say. But he kept the organisation, I think, from splintering off in avenues that were self-destructive that were urged by various parties in the struggle.

Now, you mentioned Milton Norwood. Milton Norwood played a very critical role in my view in terms of he was a man who had been in unions and knew what they were like. He was in construction. He was a very forceful person and was able to keep certain individuals from molesting some of the people who were, I feel, the ones that brought the best leadership. He, in other words, acted kind of as a buffer. As long as he felt that Tyree was doing the right thing, and that I was doing the right thing, he would argue for us, although we didn't necessarily agree with tactics in every area that came along. He kept the thing from being torn up. One of the people who did a lot to keep some of the factions which you have identified from really bringing about the collapse of the organization before it accomplished anything. To a lesser degree the same thing was true of Milton Dixon. Unfortunately, at the break-up with Tyree Scott was more or less driven from the organization, they didn't, as far as I'm concerned, didn't have the correct view of the situation. That's another story.

[00:09:52] WILLIAM LITTLE

What I'm going to try to do is try to break this down into maybe two or three areas. What I'm going to look at is primarily the CCA until Tyree broke away, and then maybe take a small summary of what occurred after that and talk about the [? train ?] that they went off and split off into, and then move into the UCWA [United Construction Workers Association] because I think that's probably—

[00:10:11] BEN

That's a more continuing and a bigger story. Although the CCA shouldn't be discounted for having been the thing that started it all.

[00:10:23] WILLIAM

No. I'm not going to discount it. The problem I have with that in terms of trying to develop a continuity in terms of organization is that the CCA began to proceed with self-interest at some point in time. It tried to disengage itself from what "the community" interests as whole were and turn into a social movement. Because it actually started out primarily as a social movement and began to develop over time, began to look towards its own self interest, and then began to develop as a professional organization with the interests of the contractor as opposed to trying to deal with the broader issues of society.

[00:11:02] BEN

The union discrimination and the impact of the impact of racial discrimination on the Black society and the society at large, because up until the action by the CCA challenging the craft unions, the membership of Blacks was, the total membership was 6.6%, and now it has increased, to some degree, and I see evidence of that in my business. I see Blacks, you know, that are probably not even conscious of the reason why they are able to be there. That is one of the discouraging things for people like myself, but we just have to accept that they think they did it all on their own. They're unmindful. Like I remember a young marine I picked up here fifteen or twenty years ago—and during World War II there was no such thing as a Black marine until the end of the war, then they were in stevedoring units—and I told this guy, I wanted to find out, you know "Do you sleep in the same barracks?" He looked at me like I was crazy. He was 17 or 18 years old, and didn't have any knowledge of the struggle and the history and all that went before. That was a blank in his mind. Well, that's the same way it is with a lot of these people that have benefitted by the work that the CCA did and the United Construction Workers.

(break)

We don't do these things with our own efforts. We always get some grant, or we get some federal support, or we get some money from somebody that wants to give us a pile of money, and then there's unfortunately oftentimes a looting of whatever funds we were able to get. I was never in agreement with that. I always thought the organization should provide for its own support, or if it didn't provide for it entirely, it ought to provide for it to a great extent. But there were people who allowed this thing to be said, who never gave a dime to CCA. I'm sorry that I can't give the names, but some of the names that you read off there are people that had the most to talk about and yet they never contributed one thing. They were some of the biggest rip-off artists that—if you wanted to really get into the thing, you ought to investigate the backgrounds of some of those names that you mentioned because you name them like they're solid citizens when that's just not so. When those names appear in your thesis and people who know the situation read it, they're going to say "What in the world is this?" And I don't see how you can perhaps say much about this aspect, but you should know this aspect. That's all I'm saying.

[00:14:08] WILLIAM

Well, what I'm going to try to do is, I'm gonna get some of this, and I have some of this information already that will allow me to begin to place the groups in certain types of categories. Say, people that have an

orientation toward common interest in the community, a person that has a professional interest, and then a person that has a self interest only. So within that context then you can begin to group them. I'm not really trying to do—I'm trying to do some scholarly work. I'm not trying to do some smear campaign. The only thing I'm going to indicate is that these people do exist and they behaved in a certain type of way and these are some of the ways that Tyree Scott and the organization mobilized some kind of support to offset that type of influence. The reason the organization was—

[00:15:03] BEN

The only reason that the organization wasn't taken over, and this is my idea, is because of the more or less fearless attitude of Tyree Scott because you have to place yourself into the situation. That was in 1969. That was the height of some of the bad aspects in Black communities where certain groups could intimidate through the threat of violence other groups. This to me is an example of the broader question about Blacks in white society. The Blacks that did this, I feel, consciously knew that they could beat fellow Blacks up, that they could intimidate them, they could misuse them, and mistreat them, and they wouldn't be subject to the same kind of—of the white power structure. So the white power structure's attitude might be to laugh. If they reported Tyree Scott got beat up, their attitude wouldn't be like the president of Seattle First National Bank got beat up. It'd be altogether different. "Well good enough for him." See, Tyree had been a thorn in their side.

So these disruptive elements, whether they conscientiously recognized this or whether they just did it out of reflex—I think that they conscientiously recognized this— but, they did all sorts of threatenings. Tyree's had guns put up to his head. I haven't had that, but others have been threatened with guns. That was a very popular area. There was a lot of postering with guns, and some of the more deadly— The deadlier a gun could be, like the 357, that was a badge of masculinity. So a guy that's trying to do something to benefit society and then also has to go through all this foolishness. It's bad enough to having to fight the unions—

[00:17:08] WILLIAM

But you got to fight the community.

[00:17:11] BEN

You've got to fight certain elements in the community. Of course, all over the United States people have been killed were these same types. Like in Boston, there were some grants, and some money, and so forth involved, and they came in and killed people that were the head of the thing, you know, the take over. This sort of thing was very much present at the time. Had it not been for Tyree the first night down at Yesler and Second Avenue. I forgot the name of that building. We were in a formative meeting, and a giant fellow came over with a word from his mentors, that we were gonna organize along a certain line, and we were going to do this, and that we were going to do that, and so forth. Tyree stood up to him, and I did too, but Tyree knew and the others knew that he had this great big old six shooter stuck in his belt. He was one of these—

[00:18:14] WILLIAM

I know who you're talking about. They call him Bone Crusher.

[00:18:16] BEN

He was one of these six foot five or whatever and built like this. He was a nice fellow, but he was a guided missile. All they do is they just program him and send him out, and he did whatever they told him was supposed to be done. Then Tyree told him, "This is a contractors organization." I will never forget it. "Contractors? Contractors? What the hell is contractors?" Tyree stood up to this guy and was able to somehow keep the organization from collapsing right at the very beginning because everything these elements touched turned to s-h-i-t. They had no concept at all of how to work in a situation such as we were working in. It's a very complex thing. I hope I'm not confusing you.

[00:19:16] WILLIAM

Not really at all.

[00:19:20] BEN

I got a lot of newspapers that I clipped. I guess it's—Is it in this file here? I don't know. I kinda want to keep them, but maybe some xerox could be made and you could—You know when we were sued, Tyree and I were on the impact sector. I don't know how much you've done in terms of newspaper research. See? There is something that would be kind of useful as far as historically.

[00:20:13] WILLIAM

Oh. Maybe my people didn't catch this one.

[00:20:18] BEN

That is earlier than even I remember. When I remember the thing heating up was in August, but apparently we formed this thing long before the actual project closing began.

[00:20:36] WILLIAM

Oh yeah. That's what he told me. He said about five months before. He said I was looking at the article about [inaudible] in the Stanford Law Review, but he mentioned that— he gave, previous to that organization, a meeting that what really initiated it was when people came when young fellas came to ask Tyree for a job and that was one of the initiating factors. I wanted to make sure of, which is did the organization start before that? I've been looking—

[00:21:09] BEN

I remember this meeting now. This was all the black contractors and people involved in trades and such, met in the basement of the First AME Church. That's what this meeting is here. There was a democratic election, and they elected Tyree Scott and they elected me. They elected him as Chairman, and they elected me Vice Chairman. I remember. Then, after that, though the time that we really then started actively doing what you're talking about was some time later. Yeah. That's correct. This brings it back.

[00:21:56] WILLIAM

Let me see what date that might have been because I'm doing a—Not a content analysis—

[00:22:02] BEN

It's June 1969.

[00:22:10] WILLIAM

I'm doing a, not a content, but a coverage analysis. How much coverage did the local newspapers provide to the CCA and the UCWA. The preliminary findings that I have got so far is that the Black press had very little, if any, regarding the whole movement, which really blew my mind. When I really looked at— The *PI* and the *Times* gave me broader coverage.

[00:22:38] BEN

The *Times* especially. The *Times* did a lot more better coverage than the *PI* in my view. Although I subscribe to them.

[00:22:45] WILLIAM

And Channel 5 did an excellent job. So what I'm going to do next, at some point in my study, I will go down to the various TV stations and get a look at their log and find out how much time they allotted to the story over time.

[00:23:04] BEN

Right. Well that would be good. Now here's— We had a very unfortunate Black press at that time. It was this and I don't know what else we had.

[00:23:18] WILLIAM

We looked at this already, and they had wide coverage on the United Construction Workers Association, but one thing which is surprising too, this organization, they don't keep Bray from trying to take over the organization. Sorry he's dead but—

[00:23:37] BEN

Oh Keve was a very destructive force. This is out of their paper here. What date is this? Oh look at—This must be commenting on that meeting that I was talking about.

(flips through papers)

You see the kind of foolishness that we had to contend with? Those people, as far as I'm concerned, were—

[00:24:57] WILLIAM

[inaudible] and it's got a lot of people.

[00:24:59] BEN

(chuckles)

It was—

[00:25:03] WILLIAM

Hate to do a job. I'm saying. [inaudible].

[00:25:06] BEN

Oh yeah. Not that Sam didn't need them, but the kind of job they did was terrible.

[00:25:17] WILLIAM

[inaudible] without your institution they'd be lost.

[00:25:24] BEN

Well they don't need to be. Sam could be a great force for Blacks in this community, but he's taken the attitude of just taking care of Sam. Now Sam— As far as I'm concerned, there are a lot of people, probably white people who are more beneficial for Blacks than Sam.

These are two articles. See, you've got a headline here, "Blacks Halt Work on County Building."

[00:26:06] WILLIAM

Yeah. What day was that anyway?

[00:26:07] BEN

That was August 29th.

[00:26:12] WILLIAM

1969.

[00:26:14] BEN

Yeah. It must have happened the day before.

[00:26:16] WILLIAM

It must be the 28th.

[00:26:20] BEN

No. Two days. Two days, so that's the 28th. The *Times*.

[00:26:24] WILLIAM

The 29th. And this was—This must be the 30th. September 30th.

I going to talk to Spellman about this sometime in the next two or three weeks.

[00:26:38] BEN

I don't think that—Spellman was good at that time, at least I think that he was about as good as you would expect, but I don't think Spellman—I think the situation is such that Spellman wouldn't have been wouldn't be as good now as he was then.

[00:26:59] WILLIAM

No. [inaudible]. I knew he worked for John.

[00:27:03] BEN

Oh you did? Well he took a lot of heat at that time. He took a lot of heat from Carroll. He took a lot of heat from the trade unions. There was just—Jammed Third Avenue and they jostled him and marched on the—We had some good legal support. Lindberg didn't do everything Tyree wanted him to do, but I tried to explain to Tyree, within the context, within the nature of our society we were getting something that nobody else got.

[00:27:40] WILLIAM

Now that's what I'm going to make out—By summation of that I want to talk about that.

[00:27:47] BEN

At that particular time, in fact people that were familiar with what was going on elsewhere in the country, said, "You guys have—The Seattle situation was just fabulous compared to what prevailed elsewhere."

Here's a picture of Scott being arrested.

[00:28:29] WILLIAM

I don't know if I should put pictures of him being arrested.

(laughs)

[00:28:33] BEN

There's one of the sites.

[00:28:34] WILLIAM

That's the university site.

I think the thing to work out and really find when I get into it are the—I think I'm going to take one section of the chapter and talk about the politics of violence. What I might do is, in the last section, prior to what I was talking about—Because what I'm going to do is just tell a story than just talk about the politics of violence. There's a lot of violence that was perpetuated, at least if not perpetuated it was articulated. In other words, there was two levels. One level of actually doing violence and one that was the action of threat of violence and another one is you can look at the dynamics of the actual violence in the community into external community, and you can begin to talk about the types of violence in these police confrontation type of things and the people that was in need of articulating on threats of violence. They didn't carry out any of the threats out there, which you know, it's a process.

[00:29:40] BEN

The police understand the use of violence, and they don't hesitate to use it, but a lot of these brothers they were just— When I was younger, maybe you never heard this term, this is off the wall kind of talk, didn't have—We used to call it woofin' too when I was—

[00:30:03] WILLIAM

Yeah that's the same thing.

[00:30:04] BEN

The police, when they talk about violence, man, they plan to use it. It's a different situation. Now, we had some bad brothers, like this is an example. This headline here. That was out there— That when the police whooped the crowd after those events.

Now, I didn't see any need. Here's my [inaudible]. I realize that violence has played a tremendous role throughout the history of mankind in bringing about change. As a Christian myself, I can't condone the use of violence, except I recognize that violence has its place in certain situations, but we—I knew that we didn't have the strength to use violence as a viable means. The only thing that we could do with violence, perhaps, is a judicious, not exactly a threat, but an implication that violence would take place, but never uncover our hand and show how weak that we really were. The minute that we uncovered our hand, after committing some violence, then the police came in and whip up the crowds, and put half of them in jail and so forth. I don't know what you really achieve there except the kind of destruction of the organization. Now there are situations where violence obviously has to be the recourse, like the Vietcong. I think their violence was justifiable. But all this did was—Some of the wishy-washy friends that we had, they were never—But they were useful friends. The way that this society works is that they don't concentrate on the issues. The issues become lost and the only thing that then they are able to see is that some bulldozers ran over the bank.

[00:32:05] WILLIAM

But if you look at it, in some sense, in other words, what Takasaki was suggesting to me, was that because that these fellows [inaudible] in the thing, because this followed violence of the strike, then you gain access to the government. Not only do you gain access to the government but you gain access to the county executives. Before that they weren't even willing to listen to you.

[00:32:26] BEN

That isn't true though. If you take the sequence of events, you'll find that this occurred long after we talked to Spellman. I would say this occurred at least a month after our initial conferences with Spellman.

[00:32:39] WILLIAM

Spellman was the 29th of August.

[00:32:41] BEN

Yeah. This is September 23rd.

I think the same thing is true of Evans, but I can't say that it is definitely. My problem is, I have to go through the file. I'm ashamed that, even though nobody else kept, I should have kept some kind of a journal or a diary. to at least identify the events that took place, but I believe that we saw Spellman before this too.

[00:33:10] WILLIAM

You mean Evans?

[00:33:10] BEN

Yeah. Evans.

I can't swear to that. I know that argument is made, but really I don't think that you want to uncover your hand on the violent side unless you really have the strength to go all the way through with it. Right after this incident, when they walked out, I was up negotiating for them to not call the police and to close the job down. They refused to not call the police. The police had been called, and they were stationed off the job site in buses. They had those tactical ones. The ones with the big long clubs and helmets had visors and everything.

When I got back to this site, the demonstrators were leaving. We walked across the street on 15th avenue, and Tyree was addressing them with one of these blow horns. The crowd was standing there on about 41st where Schmitz Hall is now. That was under construction. The police, when I was walking off the grounds, I heard them saying to some of the workmen or somebody, "Can you identify any of them? Can you identify?" So then I got across the street and passed the word to people who had been especially involved in the bulldozer and the trucks, that they should get out of there. Some of them left before, and the police grabbed Elbe Kirk and he hadn't done anything but stand off on the side and be an observer. He hadn't been in the action at all. I remember that they had L.B. in the back of the police car, but some of the guys, other fellows that I thought might've been arrested, they had gotten away. They came where Tyree was talking, and they grabbed Tyree—well, we've got the picture here—and started choking him, dragging him to this paddy wagon which they backed up.

When the crowd saw that, they started protesting. Still, they hadn't assaulted any police, but the police then surged into the crowd, I was right there, and started flailing away with these clubs. It's an awful sound just crunch, crunch, that he is hitting these bodies with these clubs and knocking people to the ground. For some reason they didn't bother me. I took the horn after Tyree got in the paddy wagon, and I remember going to the paddy wagon after they were dragging people there. "How many people are there and what are their names so I can get the lawyers?" I remember a couple of these young cops looking at me, but nobody touched me.

After that, others observed that too, and they figured I was the only one there with a suit on, and they didn't know quite how to relate to hitting me because maybe they thought it might be perhaps a little different that taking someone who they figured wouldn't be able to make very much of a protest.

Anyway, I was right in the thick of things. The TV camera shows me walking around with the bull horn trying to get the crowd to reassemble in another location and going up in the paddy wagon and looking in. That's the way that situation was. You could argue, I suppose, that this did, but we were making gains prior to that. In my view, if we had just been cool, like we went out to the Seattle-Tacoma Airport, and Tyree went out and won them. I didn't go on that one. It was out on the flight apron. Oh boy, that upset them terribly. I saw they weren't going to allow that again. They had taken all kinds of precautions to prevent that from ever occurring. But then we hit upon the idea of going out there and peacefully forming lines to request airplane tickets, even one or two, to get information about flights from here and there. A few of us even bought tickets. I bought a ticket. Doc Airoson bought a ticket, and he was around there and saying he wanted to go to—I'll never forget him telling this girl he wanted to go to Big Mule, Mississippi. She was looking for Big Mule, Mississippi, so he went to another counter and bought a ticket. We had that thing so messed up out there that they didn't know what to do. They had police from all over the county, cities, little cities were all sending some of their police to supplement the county police. There were more police out there than I'd ever seen before at the airport.

[00:38:07] WILLIAM

Was this the day before you went on the runway or the day after?

[00:38:09] BEN

I think it was the day after. The cops were there just fidgeting. They were like police dogs on a leash and being held back. Things were going great. Then Tyree made what I consider to be a very tactical error, but Tyree doesn't, at least at that time and even yet, he doesn't sometimes think through all the consequences of what an action will be. Maybe that's good under certain circumstances because if you stop to think about everything that's going to happen, then you may never do anything.

At this particular junction, we had some good white people out there too. We had the kind—They couldn't accuse them of being hippies. They didn't have long hair, and they weren't dressed in overalls, and they didn't smell bad and all that. I remember this cop, they started—Finally the word went out that we'd form hands, a ring around these ticket booths so the people couldn't get through. That was, as I recall, Mike, the politician. Mike Ross. That was his suggestion. I said, "No." I argued against it, and they went ahead and did it. So people couldn't get through, so the policemen come in there. I remember they got this white fellow, and they were choking the life out of him, nice respectable looking guy, but this guy, he was stubborn too. He wouldn't give in. It was horrible to watch. Right after that Mike tells him to sit down, and I said, "No, don't sit down!"

Continue as you were.” See that there’s a lack—In a well-disciplined organization, the vice chairman would have more authority than somebody from out of the crowd, which Mike was. Mike was never—Although he aligned himself with us, and I’m not saying he didn’t perform some useful services, he was not a part of the actual group that was running the thing. Anyhow, that just gave the police their—That was like throwing some hamburger to a bulldog. Man, they come in there and start swinging and dragging people. They didn’t even try to get them on their feet, they just dragged them on across the ground into the paddywagon. Old Mike had apparently never been arrested, and he was so proud that they arrested him. See, he had some battle marks now. He could be one of those that had gone to jail for the cause. They were arresting negroes down there, and white folks too as far as that goes, and whipping them a little bit before they put them in the wagon.

All of that could’ve been avoided! We were succeeding! The thing was going great! Why did they get impatient? We had messed them up. They didn’t know how to deal with it. We were legal, we were lawful, we were in the lines, we were messing up the system. Then we commit a tactic which gave them the opportunity, and then they came in and they did what they did. That was a sad—In fact, I think we were in the decline when that occurred. They didn’t put out this warrant or whatever it was against Jim Takasaki and me and some of the others. You were reading there where we were indicted, not indicted, but we were—They named us as—

[00:42:21] WILLIAM

As defendants?

[00:42:28] BEN

I’m trying to see if any of this correspondence—

(tape cuts off)